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REMARKS

ON THE

INEFFECTIVE STATE

OF THE

PRACTICE OF PHYSIC

IN

GREAT BRITAIN;

WITH

PROPOSALS FOR ITS FUTURE REGULATION AND IMPROVEMENT,

AND THE

RESOLUTIONS

OF THE

Members of the Benevolent Medical Society of Lincolnshire.

By EDWARD HARRISON, M. D.

President of that Society; F. R. A. S. Ed.; of the Medical Society of London, &c.

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THE FOLLOWING PAGES,

Are most respectfully inscribed,

By the AUTHOR.

from
the Author.

REMARKS

ON THE

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OF THE

PRACTICE OF PHYSIC

IN

GREAT BRITAIN, &c.

RESPECTABLE as the science of physic certainly is, and important as it is allowed to be, to the dearest interests of mankind, the practice of it has of late years fallen into a state little adverted to, as it should seem, by the public, which exposes its respectability to the utmost hazard, and endangers its very existence, as a benefit to the community.

Formerly medical men seldom ventured to engage in the practice of physic, until they had received a competent education. At present physicians without degrees, or at least without properly authorized degrees, surgeons and midwives without instruction, and apothecaries and druggists without having served an apprentice-

 ship,

ship, have intruded themselves not only into the capital, but into almost every market town in England, and have engrossed so much of the practice of the medical art, as scarcely to leave a sufficient maintenance for the well informed; who, naturally relying upon their learning and skill, have disdained to use those disingenuous artifices, which practitioners of a different description, do not hesitate to employ.

To protect the public against the ignorant, institutions, under the title of colleges, having been established in London, Edinburgh, and Dublin, a question naturally arises, why these corporations do not in fact protect the public? On enquiry it will be found, that the colleges of physicians and surgeons of London, only exert their authority over physicians and surgeons in, or near London, for they have no jurisdiction, or at best a very partial one, over the provincial faculty. And even in London the colleges do not take upon themselves, to examine the great bulk of persons, who are called apothecaries; but prescribe as physicians on many occasions; hence the community have no defence, against the dangerously ignorant, who amount to a large majority of the profession. But if the principle upon which the colleges were founded be just, why should not their power be extended

and exerted in every part of the united kingdoms? And if the apothecaries are suffered to visit patients, why is it not applied to them, as well as to physicians, and surgeons? These are questions of no trifling importance; for unless the profession be subjected to proper regulations, and restrictions, ignorant persons will continue to thrust themselves forward, and the mass of mankind, being unable to discriminate properly between the skilful, and the ignorant, dangerous pretenders will be supported, if they possess the craft, or arts of imposition. But is it fit, that in such an enlightened kingdom as ours, medicine should be suffered to remain any longer, in its present unregulated state? Is it not disgraceful that hair-dressers, cooks, taylors, farriers, &c. should for a moment be tolerated in their injurious practices? Surely the legislature is not aware of the mischief, which is daily committed, in every part of the kingdom, by the frauds of these impostors, otherwise it would take measures to prevent them.

Strongly impressed with the sentiments above stated, the association called the Medical Benevolent Society of Lincolnshire, have, among other objects, taken into consideration the state of the practice of physic, as it is exercised, in

their own county. This very important, and interesting subject was discussed, at five successive meetings, and at the last of them, several resolutions were unanimously adopted, which will be found in a subsequent part of this essay. It appears from a careful and extensive survey, that a large majority of those now engaged, in the practice of physic, surgery, or pharmacy in this country, have not received any medical education in the usual way, nor availed themselves of information, from other sources. It is also generally admitted, that in every part of England, a large proportion of the regular practitioners, in small towns and retired situations, are often very unequal to the multifarious and important duties, in which they are constantly occupied. These abuses, gradually increasing for centuries, have of late years become so truly alarming, and dangerous, that unless proper regulations be speedily adopted, it is to be feared, that the medical profession must be relinquished, under many circumstances, to empirics and incompetent practitioners.—Thus an employment, which in able hands is eminently calculated to restore lost health, and to relieve the most poignant, and complicated sufferings of humanity would not only become useless, but really prejudicial to mankind.

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The above named society, from motives of benevolence, and from regard to the credit of physic, were anxious to take measures, that none but qualified persons, should in future have the power of exercising the medical art: but such an undertaking requires for its success, the support and co-operation of a great number of the most respectable members of the profession. The company assembled at the last meeting were desirous, that the author should wait upon the Right Honourable Sir Joseph Banks, to solicit his advice and assistance, before any proceedings were instituted. He approved the undertaking, and advised us to prosecute the enquiry, from a conviction of its importance, and utility. It was considered as a proper step, in the first place, that I should visit London, to lay before some of the most able physicians and surgeons, a statement of the injurious and degrading modes of practice, in my own county, in order to determine whether any, and what, measures should be taken, to remedy the complaints above represented. I have the satisfaction to observe, that several meetings, have in consequence been held, at the house of the President of the Royal Society in Soho-square, of a number of very experienced, and eminent physicians and surgeons of the metropolis.—These gentlemen were unanimously of opinion

that

that gross, and dangerous abuses do exist, not only in Lincolnshire, but in every other part of the kingdom; and they recommended, as the most proper mode for accomplishing the objects in view, during the ensuing session of parliament, that a representation of them should be published, with as little delay as possible. In conformity with this recommendation, an hasty sketch has been attempted, of the present state of medical practice in Great Britain, and of the means, which appear to be the best adapted, for its improvement. This, though very imperfect, will, it is presumed, afford some information, and the writer may probably endeavour hereafter, to make it more comprehensive and circumstantial.

The preceding observations will perhaps be rendered more impressive, by taking a cursory view of the medical faculty, arranged under their respective heads of physicians, surgeons, apothecaries, accoucheurs, druggists, and empirics.

In the present condition of medical science, few country physicians are educated at the English universities, or think it necessary to become members of the college of physicians, and none of them have been called upon, to exhibit

hibit their testimonials, to the bishop of the diocese, who formerly exercised a judicial control, over country practitioners. Thus from the imperceptible operations of time upon men and manners, various alterations have arisen, and the wholesome regulations of our forefathers are become obsolete, and indeed in many instances inapplicable.

With this facility to assume medical titles, and which is permitted in no other civilized state, it of course follows, that the physicians, in provincial situations, enter into practice with very different degrees of instruction, and of medical skill.

Under the influence and control of the college of physicians, some wholesome rules have been adopted; but out of the precincts of London, little attention is paid to the sources of medical degrees. They may be either the reward of severe, and protracted study, or have been obtained, without previous attendance, or examination, from universities, where the chief care of the professors seems to be limited, to the fees and perquisites of admission.

At Edinburgh, it is well known that no candidate can be admitted, to the degree of doctor

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of physic, unless he has previously attended medical lectures, during three seasons, and undergone several examinations, before the professors. At Glasgow, similar examinations must be submitted to, and three years of preliminary study are required, one of which must be actually passed in the university; but at Aberdeen, St. Andrews, and several universities upon the continent, diplomas are obtained, without personal attendance, and with so little evidence of professional ability, that they certainly confer no credit, and therefore should not communicate any privilege whatever, to the professors.

When the College of Physicians was founded by Henry the Eighth, learning of all kinds was scantily diffused through the kingdom. There were then fewer public schools, or other means of literary improvement than at this time; the physicians were therefore generally instructed, in our own universities, in the preliminary branches of education, before they travelled into foreign countries for medical improvement. Nothing more was required, in this situation of things, than to produce a legitimate diploma, and submit to the ordinary examinations, before the college of physicians, or the bishop of the diocess, according to the convenience of

individuals. In process of time classical learning, and the other branches of science, became more generally cultivated. Persons gradually established themselves, as physicians, in different parts of the kingdom, who had not studied in either university. Many of these were confessedly men of extensive erudition, and great medical attainments. The bishops now began to relax in the exercise of their authority, and have, for many years, declined to exert any control over medical practitioners, in their respective dioceses. Since this privilege has been waved, physicians have satisfied themselves, on many occasions, with degrees procured, from very inferior universities; nor are there wanting many examples of persons, who have assumed the highest rank in the profession, without having obtained any diploma whatever.

It is well known that the college of surgeons possesses no authority, out of the environs of London, but judging it necessary for the good of mankind, to establish some line of distinction, between able and incompetent practitioners, the members have always encouraged provincial surgeons to enter into their body, and such, as they find qualified by examination, are furnished with appropriate testimonials. It is greatly to be lamented, that the authority of

the college is so limited, that the fellows cannot regulate the practice of surgery, by restraining the ignorant; for it must be admitted, that the usual education of a country surgeon does not qualify him, for the duties of his profession.—This is of much less consequence in chronic disorders, because the patients in general have time to seek for distant aid; but in some complaints, unless the malady be speedily removed, the affected parts become so much injured, that little can be done afterwards by the most skilful. In hurts of the brain, wounds of the large arteries, ruptures, &c. the least delay may be of great importance to the sufferer.

Had the late Duke of Bedford, for example, undergone the necessary treatment immediately after the accident, which occasioned his premature death, he probably would have been preserved many years to encourage the agriculture, and promote the internal prosperity of Britain. Want of confidence in the neighbouring faculty determined his grace, to defer the only means of relief, until the complaint had gained such strength as resisted afterwards the most skilful, and experienced assistance. In short, cases of urgency so frequently occur that, until surgeons are made equal to their important functions,

many

many lives will continue to be sacrificed to their ignorance, or temerity, in all parts of the empire.

The company of apothecaries do not undertake to examine, or grant testimonials, to any practitioners. Formerly apothecaries were to be found in most towns, who confined themselves, in a great measure, to their shops, where they compounded medicines with their own hands, according to the prescriptions of physicians, and prepared the drugs that were wanted. At present, they are so much occupied with attending upon the sick, at their own abodes, that the whole business of the shop is often confided to apprentices and journeymen, without even the occasional superintendance of the master. In consequence of this culpable inattention, the medicines directed by physicians, are too often very carelessly prepared, and the drugs of which they consist, are purchased in such a compound state, that, in many instances, it is impossible, after the strictest examination, to distinguish whether the ingredients are pure and genuine, or of a bad quality.

While the proper business of the apothecary is so much neglected, it is of little consequence

that the care and management of the sick is confided to attentive, humane, and able physicians, since their exertions are so frequently weakened, or defeated, by the misconduct of shopmen, and the sophistications of the druggist.

Midwifery being of great importance, it is much to be lamented, that no previous instruction, or test of ability, is required from those, who engage in the practice. In consequence of this neglect, it is notorious, that a great proportion of accoucheurs are very incompetent, to the due discharge of their functions.

Several persons have fallen under the author's notice, who practise midwifery, without having attended a single lecture of instructions. In a great majority of *labours*, the birth is completed by the natural and unaided exertions of the mother. In such situations, the ignorant accoucheur is in no danger of being exposed, if he only conducts himself with prudence and circumspection. He therefore obtains credit in many cases, without affording any real assistance.

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The College of Physicians, some years ago, undertook to examine, and grant licences to midwives. They have, however, lately discontinued this practice; probably, among other reasons, from its having occurred to the learned body, that since they are prohibited by their own laws, from exercising the art of widwifery, they are not the most proper persons to decide, upon the pretensions of obstetrical candidates.

Since my residence in the country, I know that great mistakes have been committed, for want of skill in this department of the profession. I will subjoin a short account of two unfortunate cases, not from any desire to censure others, but merely to confirm the assertions, which I have made. The late Mr. ****, after serving the usual apprenticeship, spent about six weeks in London, and then settled in the country. In a presentation of the child by the feet, he pulled at the legs with so much force, that the head of the child was torn from the trunk, and remained in the uterus. The practice was now become much too perplexing for his limited talents; but rather than submit to a consultation, he attempted to extract the head, by forcing his rude instruments into it. I have been credibly informed, that the efforts

for

for this purpose, were made with equal ignorance and brutality. The poor mother, terribly lacerated by such violent outrage, died a martyr to the insufficiency of her attendant. In the other case, a stout healthy woman, rather advanced in life, was taken in labour of her first child. The labour was likely to be tedious, the fœtus being of an uncommon size. Every thing, however, was proceeding in the common way, though slowly, and the mother's strength had not suffered. Under these circumstances, the accoucheur rashly opened the head. Afterwards, by turning the child, and forcible extraction, the mother sustained so much injury that she died in a few days. There is great reason to believe, that, in skilful hands, all the four lives would have been preserved to the community. I could easily add to this list, from my own observation; and until accoucheurs are more carefully instructed, such accidents must be expected frequently to occur.

Since apothecaries have so generally neglected their proper business, to intrude upon that of the physicians, surgeons, and midwives, an order of people, till lately unknown in small towns, have gradually established themselves all over the kingdom, who undertake to sell

drugs,

drugs, and compound medical prescriptions, at a cheaper rate than the apothecary can afford. Had their previous education made them sufficiently qualified for these purposes, the public might be justified in encouraging them; but, as they consist chiefly of persons, especially in small places, who never served any apprenticeship, nor had any fit education, a confidence, involving the health and lives of so many individuals, ought not to be generally conceded to them. Aspiring beyond the humble duties of a shop, most of these persons have the effrontery to attend upon the sick, and to perform those duties which ought to be discharged by the physician, or the apothecary.

It is probable that Government is not aware of the great quantities of opium, which are sold by druggists, in one shape or another, among the poor, and especially to women, who have the management of children. This is a serious moral evil, and should be stopped, by making the venders liable to heavy fines, unless in cases where it is directed by regular practitioners. By means of this powerful drug, children are kept in a quiet, or lethargic state. Thus nurses get leisure for other employments, to the great injury of the tender objects of their care, who,

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from neglect and mismanagement, contract rickets, and other obstinate disorders. Some idea may be formed of the extent of this baneful custom, from the declaration of a person of credibility, who once observed, in my hearing, that he gained from two to three pounds a week, by the sale of this powerful, and dangerous narcotic.

A few months since, Dr. Fawssett and Mr. Taylor, of Horncastle, were suddenly called to a member of the volunteer infantry of that town. They found him in a state of drowsiness, nearly approaching to apoplexy. During the night, he had been almost constantly delirious. Upon inquiring further into the case, it was discovered, that, on the preceding evening, he had applied to a druggist, who prepares what he calls *his syrup of horehound*, for coughs; and that the young man had taken it freely through the night. This nostrum does not appear to contain any horehound, though, from the obvious effects, it certainly has a large proportion of some anodyne drug. By proper means, the symptoms were gradually subdued: Had they been equally severe in the night, the patient would probably have been lost for want of assistance, and thus have added an-

other name to the numerous list of premature deaths.*

A large class of persons still remain to be described; I mean the professed quacks; who, by various artifices and bold promises, succeed too often in deceiving the credulous and unsuspecting. Were I to enter at large into the ignorance of these unauthorized practitioners, and to state only the injurious consequences, which have fallen under my own observation, I could, from those materials, make a considerable volume; but as I am less solicitous about the toleration of empiricks, than the improvement of regular practitioners, I shall satisfy myself with relating a few particulars, and leave my readers to draw their own conclusions from them.

* The prodigious and increasing consumption of this drug, so destructive of health, when injudiciously taken, is forcibly pointed out by Dr. Alderson, in his Essay on the *Rhus Toxicodendron*: "From the accounts I have received from the retail shops, I find," says the Doctor, "from three to four hundred pounds weight of solid opium are consumed every year in Hull, independent of what is disposed of by the surgeons: And the druggists all agree, that it is a yearly increasing trade; for that, thirty years ago, scarcely twenty pounds were sold in this way."

A common farrier fixed himself, some years ago, in a country village, at no great distance from Horncastle, and in his treatment of human disorders, was the cause of great mischief. He was a general practiser, but his midwifery proceedings were, in consequence of his ignorance, indecent, and cruel in the extreme. It will not be presumptuous in me to assert, that many persons, of all ages, were hurried to an untimely grave, by his misconduct and extraordinary temerity.

A short time since, an old man in my neighbourhood was killed, as I believe, by the improper treatment of a daring itinerant. He had suffered during several years from rheumatism, and the increasing pressure of old age. —The impostor having promised him something like a return of youth, he unfortunately took the bait, and by submitting to the discipline recommended, sunk under an active mercurial course, which was too severe for his ancient, and debilitated frame.

Formerly these dangerous, and arrogant adventurers were subjected to exemplary punishments, and compelled to relinquish their mischievous practices. Stowe in his Chronicles,

page

page 604, informs us, that "in the month of September, 1550, Grig, a poulterer of Surry, taken among the people for a prophet, in curing of divers diseases by words and prayers, and saying he would take no money, &c. was, by command of the Earl of Warwick and others of the council, set on a scaffold in the town of Croydon, in Surry, with a paper on his breast, whereon was written his deceitful and hypocritical dealings. And after that, on the 8th of September, set on the pillory in Southwark, being then our Lady's fair, there kept; and the Mayor of London, with his brethren the Aldermen, riding through the fair, the said Grig asked them, and all the citizens, forgiveness. Thus much for Grig."

"Of the like counterfeit physician have I noted *(in the Summary of my Chronicles, Ann.* 1382), a crafty deceiver, that took upon him to be skilful in physic, and astronomy, when his presumptuous lying could no longer be faced out, was taken, set on horseback, his face to the horse-tail, the same tail in his hand as a bridle, a collar of jordens about his neck, a whetstone on his breast, and so led through the city of London, with ringing of basons, and banished. Whereunto I had added as followeth: Such deceivers no doubt are many, who being never

 trained

trained up in reading, or practice of physic and chirurgery, (after the use of divers trades, which have failed them), boast to do great cures, especially upon women, as to make them straight that before were crooked, corbed, or crumped in any part of their bodies, &c.; but the contrary is true, for some have received gold, when THEY HAVE BETTER DESERVED the whetstone."

To this statement I can safely add, from my own observation and the testimony of others, that, in small towns at least, the regular Faculty, who have lately entered into business, are in general more superficially educated than their seniors of the same rank. This, as it appears to me, is an increasing evil, and calls loudly for legislative interference.

As soon as the candidates are required to pass through a prescribed course of study, medical men will recover their former stations in life, and contribute more effectually to the general safety.†

† In this statement, no reference has been made to quack medicines, and little notice has been taken of the various medical corporations of the united kingdom, because the projected reform, in its present shape, does not in the least refer to, or interfere with any of their rights or privileges.

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I am sufficiently aware, that, to form a new medical constitution and code of laws, would require a great deal of consideration and discussion; but if the education of those, who are in future to enter into the profession, were, in the first place, to be carefully defined (a measure by no means impracticable, or difficult), and the management of sickness committed exclusively to persons of competent skill, much, very much would be gained, both for the Faculty, and for all classes of the community. When these objects are attained, it is presumed, that able and intelligent persons may be properly employed, in forming a new and comprehensive system of medical jurisprudence.*

In large towns, few obstacles stand in the way of improvement. The difficulties are much

* To correct abuses, and restore the profession to its due rank in society, will require the cordial union and co-operation of all parties; nor does it appear to be either just or liberal, in any particular body or description of the Faculty, to endeavour to legislate out of their proper department, or beyond their own jurisdiction, except in conjunction with the rest of their brethren. The Faculty of Physic consists of physicians, surgeons, apothecaries, accoucheurs, and druggists, who are all of them acknowledged by the people, and are, therefore, equally entitled to their share of attention, in every general plan of medical improvement.

greater

greater in country situations, and extensive circuits, where the population is scanty; but it is certainly very practicable, to place all classes and descriptions of the people, in these kingdoms, under the immediate care of well instructed practitioners, without adding to the expences of their patients.

Objections have been made, to any additional tax being laid upon the Faculty, in its present situation. Adam Smith has observed, and I believe, with truth, that medical men do not receive a sufficient pecuniary reward for their trouble. Since his time, this evil has rapidly increased, and is now become so apparent, that few young persons, of liberal attainments, or creditable parentage, will enter into any of the subordinate departments. The assistants, and apprentices of apothecaries, no longer object, in many instances, to perform the offices of groom, and servant, in the house, when they are disengaged from the business of the shop. Persons thus introduced into a liberal profession, are obliged to content themselves, from pecuniary considerations, with slender and very inconsiderable acquirements; hence the medical character is degraded, and reputable youths are discouraged, from adopting it as an employment.

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Not many years ago, the attornies were almost equally depressed, and, in consequence, needy adventurers could be found in all parts of the kingdom, who would undertake the most discreditable causes. Since the introduction into the profession, has been made more difficult by large fees of admission, low-bred persons are discouraged from entering into it, and, in consequence, the profession has already acquired additional credit.

If medical candidates were once subjected to proper regulations, I am fully satisfied, that the Faculty, and community at large, would derive great benefit from the change. Indeed some limitations, and encouragements are indispensably necessary, to induce young men, of good families and liberal attainments, to direct their attention to medical pursuits.

" We trust our health to the physician; our fortune, and sometimes our life and reputation, to the lawyer and attorney. Such confidence could not safely be reposed in people of a very mean, or low condition. Their reward must be such, therefore, as may give them that rank in the society, which so important a trust requires. The long time, and the great expence which must be laid out in their education, when

combined

combined with this circumstance, necessarily enhance still further the price of their labour."*

To conclude, my object, in what relates to the Faculty now established, is not to disturb the existing race of practitioners, but to introduce a reform, by supplying vacancies as they occur in the profession, with competent successors, and thus to engage the zealous assistance of my brethren, in securing to the future professors, an object of such importance to the public. In this way, the completion of the plan will be gradual, and distant; but, since it will neither oppose the interests, nor excite the jealousy of those, who now depend upon medicine for their *support* and maintenance, I venture to recommend it, with greater confidence, to general notice and *support*.

* Adam Smith on the Wealth of Nations.

BULL INN, HORNCASTLE,

September 7, 1805.

At a numerous and respectable meeting of the Lincolnshire Medical Practitioners, convened this day, by public advertisement, the following resolutions and address, proposed by Dr. Harrison, the chairman, were unanimously adopted, after a minute, and careful discussion.

1*st*. It appears to this meeting, that the principal statutes and provisions, relating to medical men of every denomination, situated out of the precincts of London, are rendered obsolete, from never having been properly enforced, since they were first enacted; or have become wholly inapplicable to the present times, from the numerous subsequent changes, which have taken place in the education, and practice of medical men, as well as in the customs, and manners of the people.

2*dly*. That the practice of medicine, in all its branches, has, of late years, been rapidly declining, in respectability, in usefulness, and in the emoluments of its professors, owing to the great number of quacks, dispersed through

every part of the kingdom, and other causes, likely to continue, so long as the profession remains, in its present circumstances.

3dly. Medicines of every kind, are liable to so many adulterations, in the hands of compounders, wholesale dealers, and others, that numerous disappointments in practice, can be traced entirely to these causes, which it will be impossible to prevent, until the drug-trade be subjected to some new, and better regulations.

4thly. It appears, from authentic documents, that the regular Faculty do not constitute one-ninth * of the practitioners, now occupying physic for emolument, in the county of Lincoln.

5thly. That among the numerous evils, which redound to a credulous public, from the temerity of ignorant empiricks, there is one, which seems to merit particular notice, as involving very pernicious effects, as well moral as physical—We allude to the unquestionable fact, that there are some, who acquire considerable sums of money, at the expence of an irreparable mischief, done to many pregnant women, and

* See pages 38, 39.

their

their harmless offspring, by attempting to relieve them, from the natural consequences of their indiscretions.

6*thly.* That the grievances above enumerated, are of sufficient magnitude, to justify an application to the Legislature, for a reform of the medical laws; and that the following be suggested, as likely to contribute much to its efficacy.

7*thly.* That every person *now* in practice, who has served his apprenticeship, or attended lectures, in any respectable school of medicine, be still suffered to retain his situation, notwithstanding any improvement, which may hereafter take place, in the medical constitution.

8*thly.* That, after a time to be limited, no other person shall be allowed, under severe penalties, to practise physic for emolument, until he shall have passed through a sufficient course of preparatory study, and instructions.

9*thly.* That in the event of this improvement, in the medical system, it would be for the advantage of the public, and the increased respectability of the profession, if every person

were required to pay a suitable fine, on receiving his certificate.

10*thly*. That nothing in this projected reform, is intended to interfere with the sale of nostrums, or concealed medicines, from which, at this time, Government receives *any revenue;* although it is the unanimous sense of this meeting, that it would be more for the advantage of the community, to make a pecuniary acknowledgment, in every future case, to the discoverer of a new remedy, or useful method of treating the sick, than to reduce the ingenious to seek for their reward in the arts of imposture, or to suffer the credulous to remain a sport, and prey, to profligate adventurers.

11*thly*. That it would tend very much to meliorate our poor laws, if an improvement, of the medical police, constituted part of the system, now in contemplation, with the Legislature, as it would, in the event of sickness, be found not only an addition to the comforts, of this important class of our fellow creatures, but prevent great imposition, and consequent expence to parishes, from improper persons obtaining relief, and rescue the objects themselves, from the hands of uneducated practitioners; in many

instances,

instances, protracting their very valuable, and useful lives, to the community at large.

12thly. That the operation of the medical laws, be no longer confined within the limits of the metropolis. Their influence ought to be equally felt, in every part of the kingdom, and as much as possible, through the extended possessions of the British empire.

ADDRESS.

IT may not be improper, nor uninteresting to the public, in this early stage of an undertaking, set on foot for the purpose of procuring a medical reform, that we should more fully explain its leading objects, and the particular views of those gentlemen, who originally engaged in that arduous design.

At the anniversary of the Benevolent Medical Society, held in September, 1804, the attending members were unanimously of opinion, that the practice of physic, among regulars, had degenerated, of late years, through the county, and was, besides, so much engrossed by ignorant, and unprincipled pretenders, of various descriptions, that, unless something could be speedily adopted, to raise the character of the healing art, it would, ere long, be abandoned, to persons of inferior learning, and inadequate pretensions. In confirmation of this opinion, they remarked, that only a small number of their present apprentices, and journeymen, were of respectable parentage, or had acquired a suitable knowledge, in the classics, and other branches of preparatory learning. It was further observed, that very few of their

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near relatives, are intended for the medical profession; though, were it not for so discouraging a prospect, they would be inclined, for many reasons, to give it a decided preference. Actuated by these considerations, the members agreed to constitute themselves into a Society,* and to exert their best endeavours, to restore an useful, and honourable profession, to its former rank, by the suggestion of such legal provisions, as might seem most requisite, to promote its efficay, and to secure the due qualification of its professors.

It was determined to commence the inquiry, by circulating printed queries,† with a view to ascertain the real state of the healing art, in Lincolnshire; and from the answers returned

* The meetings of this, and of the Benevolent Medical Society, were always appointed for the same day, to accommodate those members, who had not leisure for frequent attendances. After the business of the Benefit Society was finished, another association, consisting of the same persons, was immediately constituted, to deliberate upon the expedience, and necessity, of a medical reform. Five meetings have been held, in different parts of the county, since July, 1804; and at that in September, 1805, all the preceding resolutions were cautiously discussed, and unanimously adopted.

† See page 40.

to

to them, it is ascertained, that the regulars do not constitute *one-ninth* of the medical practitioners, in this extensive, and opulent county. Such a condition of things, calls, indeed, loudly for reform. The persons already engaged, in pursuit of this desirable object, are extremely solicitous, to obtain *an immediate*, and *general co-operation*, among the Faculty of the united kingdom; that effectual measures may be adopted, in the next session of Parliament, to prevent further abuses; which would be completely effected, by imposing proper restraints upon quacks, and compelling all regular practitioners, not already admitted, to be sufficiently instructed, before they presume to interfere with the health, or lives, of their fellow-creatures.

Attempts have been made, at different times, to introduce a variety of alterations, into the practice of medicine, which have hitherto miscarried, chiefly, perhaps, because they were undertaken, and conducted, by particular descriptions of the Faculty, without a proper concurrence, among the various, and distinct classes of the profession. It must be admitted, that all partial efforts, and exclusive combinations, are more calculated to excite suspicion, and awaken jealousy, than to effect a solid re-

form ; which cannot indeed be produced, without due provision, that the interests, and privileges of the whole body, shall be equally consulted, and impartially maintained.

Whatever may be the imperfections of the plan proposed, it is, at least, free from personal views, and party considerations. The association was originally projected, in a mixed company, and has been uniformly supported, by all ranks in the profession. Conscious, however, that the best, and most laudable intentions, are liable to be mistaken, or misrepresented, the outlines of the scheme were submitted, to some of the most eminent practitioners in Great Britain, to able lawyers, and to persons in high, and commanding stations, before it was generally circulated, in the county. After it had received the marked approbation of these respectable, disinterested, and enlightened characters, and had been submitted to the Faculty, at district meetings, a general one was called, by advertisement, to reconsider the proposals. They are now offered to the public, with the hope of inducing medical men, in other parts of the empire, to unite for their common benefit, and, what is of much greater importance, for the general advantage, and security of all parts of society.

Certain restrictions have been imposed upon authorized practitioners, in London, in consequence of which, the practice of medicine is better conducted, in the metropolis, than in the country. In provincial situations, it is well known, that no inquiries are ever made, from authority, into the education, or professional acquirements, of any practitioners. Each takes the title, and fills the situation, which is most suitable to his inclination, or advantage. From this unaccountable supineness, or inattention, there is great reason to believe, that, in Lincolnshire, persons have assumed the *highest rank in physic*, without having obtained a medical degree, or having attended lectures, in any university. Where the professional dignity, and concomitant privileges of a physician, are so easily assumed, it will not occasion much surprise, if other persons should have intruded themselves into subordinate departments, with slender, or very inadequate pretensions.

Since therefore, an undertaking, of so much importance to the community at large, is not likely to originate in the capital, for the reasons already given, the Lincolnshire Faculty hope, that they shall not be thought to arrogate too much, in venturing to recommend a medical reform, to the serious attention of their bre-

thren, in general; and, as the approbation of several very eminent practitioners, resident in London, has already been obtained, they are persuaded, that this important measure will be powerfully supported, in the capital, if the provincial Faculty be but zealously inclined to concur in it.

The *associates* are induced to propose, from a desire to effect their object, by methods the least harsh, which may be devised, or injurious to the interests of others, that the restrictions fall entirely upon future candidates, for practice. They are encouraged to believe, that this proposal will be favourably received, by the British Legislature, because it was determined, a few years ago, when a tax was laid upon attornies, and solicitors, that the members, previously admitted, should not be included *.

The situation of both Faculties, in these respects, being so nearly similar, it is presumed, that Parliament will abide by the precedent, that it lately established.

* See an Act, Anno 34 Geo. III. Chap. 14. for granting to his Majesty, certain stamp duties on indentures of clerkships to solicitors, and attornies, &c.

It ought to be stated, in justice to the original promoters, that only a few of them can expect to derive much pecuniary advantage, from any changes, or improvements, in the practice of physic. They consist chiefly of practitioners, who, having been several years established, in their respective circuits, have arrived at their full measure of professional confidence, and advancement. Nor can it be supposed imputable to vanity, if such persons claim some acquaintance, with the corruptions in medicine, or suggest, what they think proper means, for removing them.

Whether the whole, or any part, of the proposed scheme, is fit to become the groundwork of a medical reform, must be left to the opinion of others; and, to ascertain that opinion, it is now previously submitted, by its authors, to the candid examination of their brethren in general. Whatever may be their determination, it is presumed, that a due consideration of the various facts, which have been brought into view, in the foregoing resolutions, cannot fail to impress every reader, with the great importance of the subject under consideration, and to excite the utmost solicitude, *for a temperate and complete reform, in the exercise of a profession, which, under the guar-*

guardianship of judicious laws, will not only secure the removal of many serious evils, consequent on the prevalence of ignorance, and imposture; but is fully calculated, by its usefulness and importance, to justify those high pretensions, which have been ever readily acknowledged, by the liberal, and intelligent part of mankind.

HORNCASTLE DISTRICT.

DR. FAWSSETT, *Vice President.*

The county of Lincoln was, in September, 1804, divided into ten medical departments, to facilitate an enquiry into the state of medicine, for the county. This district comprehends the market towns of Horncastle, Spilsby, Alford, and Tattershall.

5 Physicians, all graduates of Scotland, reside in this division.

11 Surgeon-apothecaries exercise medicine in this division.

25 Druggists. Probably one served an apprenticeship.

40 Irregulars, of both sexes, over and above the druggists.

63 Midwives. Not one has received any instructions.

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144 Persons exercise medicine, for gain, in this district; of whom only one, in nine, had been previously educated, for the profession.

MARKET

MARKET RAZON DISTRICT.

MR. SHUTTLEWORTH, *Vice President.*

This district comprehends the market towns of Wragby, Razon, and Castor.

No Physician resides in this division.

7 Regular practitioners, denominated Surgeon-apothecaries, exercise medicine in this division.

9 Druggists. One served an apprenticeship.

17 Irregulars, of both sexes, over and above the druggists. * *One of the men follows midwifery.*

32 Midwives, not one has received any instructions.

—

65 Persons exercise medicine, for gain, in this division; of whom not one, in nine, had been previously educated, for the profession.

* The county of Lincoln contains several uneducated men-midwives, One of them, the son of a Cow doctor, is, I believe, equally an human and veterinary operator.

QUERIES,

QUERIES,

Addressed to Medical Practitioners, in the County of Lincoln.

I. Please to set down the name of every Physician, in your neighbourhood, on another piece of paper, to correspond with this query, or on this paper, immediately below it; and state, whether he graduated in England, Ireland, Scotland, or in some foreign University.

Physician's name.	Residence.	Where he graduated.

II. Insert, in like manner, the name of each Practitioner in Surgery, stating, whether he confines himself to surgery alone, or exercises it, with midwifery, with pharmacy, or both.

Surgeon's name.	Residence.	What other part of the profession is followed by him.

III.

III. Insert likewise, the name of every Man-midwife, noting whether he is confined to midwifery alone, or joins to it the practice of physic, of surgery, or of pharmacy.

Name of Man-midwife.	Residence.	Other branch of the profession in which he is engaged.

IV. Insert the name of every Apothecary, noting whether he confines himself to pharmacy, or acts likewise in physic, surgery, or midwifery.

Apothecary's name.	Residence.	Other department in which he is employed.

V. Insert the name of every Druggist, both in towns and villages, stating whether he or she follows these employments alone, or in conjunction with any other trade: also, whether he or she prepares medical prescriptions, or interferes in cases of physic, surgery, or midwifery.

Name.	Residence.	The other trade or employment, to which he applies himself.

VI. Insert the name of every Irregular, whether itinerant or stationary, who undertakes to set bones, to find out complaints by the urine, heal sores, to cure ruptures, diseased eyes, the venereal disease, consumptions, &c.

Name.	Residence.	Pretensions.

VII. Insert, of every neighbouring Midwife, the

Name.	Abode.	Professional education.

January 1805.

SIR,

The College of Physicians, in London, was founded so long ago as the reign of Henry VIII.; and although many changes have taken place, in the manners and customs of mankind, few efforts have been made, since that time, to improve the condition of medical men, or to promote their usefulness in society. In consequence of this inattention, the kingdom is liable to be injured by irregulars, who interfere with the established Faculty, and do a great deal of mischief, among the credulous, and inferior classes.

It is with a view to ascertain the full extent of these evils, that I have forwarded to you the inclosed queries; and I do not hesitate to affirm, that, if properly executed through the county, the Faculty will be enabled, by the united answers, to form a most important medical document, and one that cannot fail to excite a lively attention, to the best interests of the profession, and of society in general.

I h

I have to request, that you will have the goodness carefully to answer the different Queries, and return the paper to me, on or before the

I am, Sir,

P. S. The name of every person should be included, in some one of these sections, who practises medicine for gain, whether his employment be great, or small.

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